



September 25, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

Please accept this letter as strong support for the Maine Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER IX) grant application to repair three highway bridges in two neighboring rural counties in central Maine.

As you are aware, the State of Maine has unique infrastructure challenges due to its geography, weather and population density. Much of Maine is rural, making Maine one of the most rural states in the country. The rural nature of the state makes reliable infrastructure critical for people to get to and from work, go to school, shop and access health care centers. This TIGER IX project will repair three (3) highway bridges in Penobscot County and neighboring Piscataquis County. The bridges are Mattawamkeag, Mattawamkeag Bridge #2522, Milo, Pleasant River #3244 and T3 Indian Purchase TWP, West Branch Bridge #3666. These three bridges are critical to the residents in this area for access to I-95 heading North or South, and to access other parts of the state via state roads. One of these bridges, if closed, will cause users to detour approximately 100 miles. This is clearly an unacceptable outcome for both residents traveling for work or pleasure and truck drivers moving freight through the state and into Canada. If these bridges are not rehabilitated, this region of the Northeast will see a further decline in financial opportunities.

I am pleased that MaineDOT is seeking assistance from the US Department of Transportation to repair this quickly declining bridge infrastructure. I strongly believe that this region of the country cannot be competitive on a regional, national or global scale if the highway corridors are not upgraded to ensure resiliency and reliability. The declining condition of these bridges reduces the quality of life for the residents and works to further expand the rural opportunity gap experienced in this area of Maine.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you please consider funding this project fully in this round of 9th round of TIGER funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Mathew A Polstein